

### **Remarks**

The Office Action mailed August 30, 2007 has been carefully considered. Favorable reconsideration of the remaining claims in the present application is respectfully requested.

The Attorney for Applicants and Dr. Iqbal Ahmed wish to thank Examiner Lee for the courteous and helpful interview of November 20, 2007.

Claims 3-6, 8-10, 14-15, 17-19, and 29 have been amended for clarification and consistency. Claims 30 and 31 have been cancelled. Claim 32 has been newly added. No new matter has been added to these claims.

### ***Claim Rejections***

In Paragraph 2 of the Office Action, current claims 3-6, 8, 9, and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. Claim 29 has been amended according to the specification. Withdrawal of this rejection is requested.

In Paragraph 4 of the Office Action, current claims 3-6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17-19, and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Mertens et al. (WO 00/53664; equivalent U.S. 6,620,899) for similar reasons set forth previously.

Mertens et al. does not disclose the present invention as set forth in the current claims of this response. In the previous Office Actions, the Examiner states that Mertens et al. discloses treatment of superabsorbent particles at the surface with an aqueous solution of aluminum sulfate (example 1). Mertens et al. discloses in Example 1 treatment of superabsorbent particles at the surface with a solution of 1,3-dioxolan-2-one, water, and aluminum sulfate and subsequently heated for 30 minutes in an oven to 180°C. This corresponds to what is called a surface crosslinked superabsorbent polymer. However, Mertens et al. fails to disclose or suggest coating

the superabsorbent polymer with a coating containing salt that can be washed off and wherein the superabsorbent polymer coated with the coating containing salt has a free water absorption of about 3.6g/g or less. In view of the foregoing remarks, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3-6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17-19, and 29 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Mertens et al. is requested.

In Paragraph 5 of the Office Action, claims 3-6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17-19, and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Inger et al. (U.S. 7,157,141).

Inger et al. does not disclose the present invention as set forth in the current claims of this response. In the Office Action, the Examiner states that Inger et al. discloses FAVOR SXM 6565 (commercially available surface crosslinked polyacrylic acid powder) treated with  $Al_2(SO_4)_3$ . As with Mertens et al., Inger et al. fails to disclose or suggest coating the superabsorbent polymer with a coating containing salt that can be washed off and wherein the superabsorbent polymer coated with the coating containing salt has a free water absorption of about 3.6g/g or less. In view of the foregoing remarks, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3-6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17-19, and 29 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Inger et al. is requested.

In Paragraph 6 of the Office Action, claims 3-6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17-19, and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Gartner et al. (WO 98/49221; equivalent U.S. 6,323,252) for the same reasons set forth in previous office actions.

Gartner et al. does not disclose the present invention as set forth in the current claims of this response. In the Office Action, the Examiner states that Gartner et al. discloses a composition containing superabsorbent particles contacted with multivalent metal salt and

further comprising surface crosslinker. Examples 18-20 of Gartner et al. disclose superabsorbent particles surface treated with an aqueous solution of aluminum ion. However, as with Mertens et al., Gartner et al. fails to disclose or suggest coating the superabsorbent polymer with a coating containing salt that can be washed off and wherein the superabsorbent polymer coated with the coating containing salt has a free water absorption of about 3.6g/g or less. In view of the foregoing remarks, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3-6, 8-10, 14, 15, 17-19, and 29-31 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Gartner et al. is requested.

In Paragraph 7 of the Office Action, claims 10, 14, 15, and 17-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Ganslaw et al. (U.S. 4,043,952) for the same reasons set forth in previous office actions.

Ganslaw et al. does not disclose the present invention as set forth in the current claims of this response. In the Office Action, the Examiner states that Ganslaw et al. discloses surface treatment of superabsorbent particles with a solution of polyvalent metal ion. However, as with Mertens et al., Ganslaw et al. fails to disclose or suggest coating the superabsorbent polymer with a coating containing salt that can be washed off and wherein the superabsorbent polymer coated with the coating containing salt has a free water absorption of about 3.6g/g or less. In view of the foregoing remarks, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 10, 14, 15, and 17-19 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Ganslaw et al. is requested.

In Paragraph 8 of the Office Action, claims 10, 14, 15, and 17-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Harada et al. (U.S. 5,115,011) for reasons set forth previously.

Harada et al. does not disclose the present invention as set forth in the current claims of this response. In the Office Action, the Examiner states that Harada et al. discloses treatment of superabsorbent particles with an aqueous solution of aluminum sulfate, followed by drying the particles, and further elaborates on this. However, as with Mertens et al., Harada et al. fails to disclose or suggest coating the superabsorbent polymer with a coating containing salt that can be washed off and wherein the superabsorbent polymer coated with the coating containing salt has a free water absorption of about 3.6g/g or less. In view of the foregoing remarks, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 10, 14, 15, and 17-19 under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Harada et al. is requested.

### ***Conclusion***

In view of the remarks presented herein, Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested. If, however, any issues remain unresolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's counsel at the number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

/Philip P. McCann/

Philip P. McCann  
Registration No. 30,919  
SMITH MOORE LLP  
P.O. Box 21927  
Greensboro, NC 27420  
(336) 378-5302  
phil.mccann@smithmoorelaw.com

Date: November 30, 2007

File No.: 5003073.034US1